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ABSTRACT

In the context of multicultural Australia, bilingual education has generally become a viable educational option for all school age students, but there is less interest in developing bilingual skills in adults with a non-English speaking background (NESB). This paper arises out of a 1991 research study on "The Literacy Needs of NESB Women." One focus of the paper is to identify the position on adult biliteracy taken by key parties in the adult literacy and basic education field, including the industry training board, private employers, non-government organizations, and the government. A second focus is to explore the arguments in favor of developing the biliteracy of NESB adults and of promoting positive attitudes towards biliteracy among those directly concerned, such as students, teachers, administrators, and politicians. Strategies for implementing literacy programs for adults are discussed. It is concluded that biliteracy has not attained a high profile and that first- and second-language literacy are interrelated dimensions of literacy for Australia's NESB population. Contains 44 references. (LB)

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MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON ADULT BILITERACY

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ABSTRACT

In the context of multicultural Australia, bilingual education has generally become a viable educational option for all school age students. There is much less interest in developing bilingual skills in adults with a non-English speaking background (NESB). Monolingual literacy in English for English speaking background (ESB) and NESB adults, however, is receiving much attention and has become official government policy. The concept of biliteracy is viewed negatively by those who reject it on unsound methodological grounds or on practical grounds because of the difficulty of linguistically matching students and teachers. Others view it positively. On the one hand, they consider it, in a narrow pragmatic sense, a useful crutch for the acquisition of English language literacy. On the other, and more imaginatively, it is seen as a skill of value in itself. This paper arises out of a research study on *The Literacy Needs of NESB Women* (1991). One focus of the paper is to identify the position on adult biliteracy taken by key parties in the adult literacy and basic education (ALBE) field. A second is to explore the arguments in favour of developing the biliteracy of NESB adults and, further, of promoting positive attitudes towards biliteracy among those directly concerned such as students, teachers, administrators and politicians.

ABBREVIATIONS

AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
ALBE	Adult Literacy and Basic Education
ALLP	Australian Language and Literacy Policy
AMEP	Adult Migrant Education Program
CAE	Council of Adult Education
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DFE	Division of Further Education, Ministry of Education Victoria
DILGEA	Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs
ESB	English speaking background
ESL	English as a Second Language
L1	First, native language or mother tongue (in this context, LOTE)
L2	Second language (in this context, English)
LEP	Low English Proficiency
LOTE	Language Other Than English
NESB	Non-English speaking background
NGO	Non-government organisation
NPL	National Policy on Languages
OMA	Office of Multicultural Affairs
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UG	Universal Grammar

INTRODUCTION

The issue of adult literacy has emerged as a key concern as Australia moves towards the twenty-first century. In part, this is because literacy skills have been re-defined in terms of essential life or survival skills. For instance, according to Hartley (1989), any individual with inadequate English including literacy suffers disadvantage in many spheres of everyday life - social, economic and cultural. Thus adult education has been re-born as something for everyone, revitalising the slogan 'lifelong education' and giving new meaning to the concept of 'mass education'. Work-related competence is being thrown into strong relief by industry and award restructuring in which human resources investment is a central imperative.

Immigration policy ensures the continued cultural and linguistic diversification of Australian society (DILGEA 1991a,b). As a consequence, currently more than 20 per cent of the population is overseas born; 7 out of the top 10 migrant source countries are Asian; approximately 250 languages are spoken; and Islam is the fastest growing non-Christian religion. Hence, it is not surprising that English language competence and literacy in English have particular salience given a workforce in which a considerable proportion of workers come from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). Much less clear-cut is the role of languages other than English (LOTE). The implementation of a non-discriminatory immigration policy has been the catalyst for the heightened diversity in the immigration intake. Along with that have come changes in multiculturalism policy - the policy which is central to the 'management' of our culturally diverse society.

The focus of multiculturalism policy has been sharpened to a more comfortable alignment with economic rationalism. This has been achieved by defining the three major dimensions of multiculturalism as cultural identity, social justice and economic efficiency (OMA 1990:69). Management, unions, governments, workers and the community in general, all have a stake in restructuring with its potential for structural and attitudinal change. There is a significant acceptance of the need for utilisation of latent human skills to accompany advances in technological change. As part of this, the development and utilisation of language resources have been given considerable publicity.

A heightened interest in languages policy has become evident in at least some sections of Australian society. The publication of the *National Policy on Languages* (NPL) (1987) and the White Paper known as *Australia's Language : The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP) (1991) seem to suggest that a watershed in Australia's language history

has been reached. The nature of this watershed is the subject of considerable contention. Three only of a whole spectrum of positions on language and literacy are illustrated here.

For some, the NPL marks the positive transformation of 'multiculturalism away from cultural pluralism towards social equity'. It highlights also the broad social goals of language by including 'enrichment, economic opportunities, external relations and equality' (Kalantzis, Cope and Slade 1989:65). One feature applauded by the supporters of this position is the exploitation of Australia's bilingual resources for trade and tourism and the great expansion in English language teaching, both on- and off-shore, to clients from many of our neighbouring countries.

For others, perhaps less enamoured with the concept of a multicultural Australia or at least uncertain of its meaning, the significant development is the enshrining of English as the official language, especially in the ALLP. This is not to say that there is not also some acknowledgement of the cultural value and economic usefulness of LOTE, including Aboriginal languages. The rather cryptic statement of the then Federal Minister for Education (Dawkins, Press Release 1990) expressed something of this position:

> We have a unique multicultural society in Australia. But we are a monolingual nation. The functional language of this country is English and all Australians need to have a grasp of it.

In the same press release, Mr Dawkins contrasted 'English' language and 'foreign' languages in the Australian context; surely a denial of the essential message of the national languages policy.

A third interpretation is that there is an unfortunate contradiction in the terminology used in the titles of these official documents, that is, the national policy on languages and the Australian language and literacy policy. Moore (1991:52-53), for example, finds the assumption in the latter title that English and language are synonymous both 'ethnocentric and objectionable' and suggests that it is 'a displacement of the pluralism embodied in both the title and principles of the National Policy on Languages'. She goes further to suggest that Minister Dawkins via this statement is attempting 'to contain language policy', 'to dislodge it from the context of multiculturalism', and 'to pick out discrete items that appear to be directly linked to economic

benefits' (that is, foreign languages, English as a commodity and literacy).

In spite of the confused picture presented by these differing ideas, the Foreword to the ALLP (1991:iii-iv) does make a plea which reflects the positive tenets of multiculturalism. It states that :

> Proficiency in our national language, Australian English, is obviously necessary for an individual to participate as fully as possible in Australian society. But as important as proficiency in Australian English is for us as Australians, we also need to enhance our ability to communicate with the rest of the world. We must increase our strength in languages other than English in order both to enrich the intellectual and cultural vitality of our population, and to help secure our future economic well-being. Our multilingual population invests us with valuable linguistic resources. But we must not rely simply on the skills of those who are already bilingual. Many more Australians need to learn a second language.

The White Paper gives equal support to language and literacy; but what is literacy? According to the Darwin Symposium on Literacy, in the draft report entitled provocatively 'No Limits to Literacy' (1989), the type of literacy appropriate for a technologically advanced society is <u>active literacy</u>. This is a generic concept referring to the ability to use language in a way that enhances thinking, creating and questioning capacities; all of which are required to negotiate the complexities of life in a modern society. There is a whole range of specific kinds of literacy ranging from functional to political literacy. Our interest is in <u>biliteracy</u> but this is not a term with much currency as yet in the Australian context. Bilingual education for school age youth has become a small but growing phenomenon in Australia in recent years. In spite of its high profile in official education documents and policies, however, it has been dogged by serious problems of inadequate resources. There has been no comparable interest in, let alone provision for, developing bilingual skills in NESB adults.

As part of a recent study on the literacy needs of NESB women (Foster and Rado 1991), we explored <u>English literacy</u> (and lack of literacy) and basic education issues and noted the complexity of the language and literacy situation in Australia. One cannot take for granted that the four language skills of reading, writing, speaking and comprehending are evenly distributed among the NESB population. Recent evidence on literacy levels in English suggests that the distribution among children and adults of

English speaking background (ESB) is similarly problematic (see, for example, Stromback and Preston 1991; Wickert 1989). It is to be expected that the full range of language skills in the mother tongue or L1 also will be unevenly distributed among the NESB population.

For this reason, we found it necessary to extend the definition of literacy beyond the confines of a single language. We identified three types of literacies. These are (Foster and Rado 1991:73):

* monolingual literacy in English - the majority of the Australian population belongs to this category including some of NESB;
* monolingual LOTE literacy - some NESB migrants fit into this category; and
* bilingual literacy in English and in a LOTE - this category includes both native and non-native speakers of a LOTE, the former being in the majority.

Because the methodology of our study on NESB women included participant and non-participant observation of learners in adult literacy and basic education (ALBE) classes, collection of data in oral and written form, and extensive interviews with teachers, organisers and administrators of courses for newly arrived and longer resident NESB migrants as well as employers and informed and interested academics, we had the opportunity to identify these literacies in action and to gather perceptions of the importance of biliteracy from a range of respondents. By this means, our ideas developed originally at the conceptual level were able to be confirmed empirically. The broader taxonomy of literacy we identified was of heuristic value to assist us to construct an argument in this paper to counter practical and methodological objections to the support of the L1 dimension of biliteracy.

The paper explores our contention that literacy in a multicultural Australia must be viewed in *multiple perspective*. Important as English (or L2) literacy is for NESB Australians, this should not be pursued at the expense of L1 literacy, although the degree of L1 literacy may be a matter of personal choice. The discussion falls into three parts. In the first part, the concept of bilingualism and biliteracy for children and adults in Australia is discussed briefly. Second, we draw on the results of our study to identify positions on adult literacy, including biliteracy, taken by a select sample of the lay public. We also include views of those who work in the language and literacy field. That our study focused on women means that we must take care in generalising to the migrant population in general which,

of course, includes males as well as females. In the final section, we examine the arguments in favour of developing the biliteracy of NESB adults and offer ways of countering practical and methodological problems which impede its implementation.

DEFINING BILINGUALISM AND BILITERACY

The importance of knowing and therefore learning a second language is now not only recognised in Australia but also formulated in terms of government policy (Lo Bianco Language Action Plan 1989; White Paper 1991). In this respect, Victoria is in the forefront. For those of us who believe in the merits of bilingualism, this is good news. The manner of implementing this language learning/teaching policy, however, needs to be worked out in greater detail. In doing so, some questions will have to be answered. These include:

* In the Australian context, who is a bilingual?
* Should one make a distinction between oral and literate bilinguals?
* Should one distinguish between child and adult learners?

In previous publications, we have defined a bilingual as an individual who can function in more than one language environment in face-to-face encounters. This is a definition which makes it possible to include in the bilingual category the children of NESB migrants who may have a receptive knowledge only of their parents' language. We called these children social bilinguals because their circumstances make it imperative for them to become proficient in their parents' language so that communication in the home can be maintained. At the same time, the children must become proficient in English in order to participate in the life and education of mainstream society. It can be said that for these children bilingualism is a necessity. In contrast, for children with an English speaking background (ESB), bilingualism, that is learning a LOTE, can be seen as optional, to be pursued for vocational or cultural reasons or as a leisure activity. We called these children cultural bilinguals.

A distinction must also be made between school age children and adults in Australia. By extending our definition of bilingualism to adults in the context of formal teaching, we realised that we need to make an additional distinction between oral and literate bilinguals. This gives a variety of combinations of social, cultural, oral, literate as well

as oral *and* literate bilinguals. In this paper, we focus on NESB adult learners needing L1 literacy tuition. For these persons, there is, at least in Victoria, hardly any opportunity to upgrade their oracy to literacy skills in their L1 LOTE unless they study the language at a tertiary institution usually as part of a degree (see, Rado and Foster 1989). LOTE tuition is not part of the ALBE courses that target these learners; the emphasis is on L2 or English literacy. Consequently, their chances of becoming proficient biliterates are considerably reduced.

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES on L1 LITERACY

Pros and Cons

1. Views from 'the public'

These are comments derived as part of the NESB women's study from face-to-face interviews in a range of settings in Victoria. The respondents come from specific segments of 'the public' but, in general, they represent lay opinion in matters of biliteracy. We do not suggest that one can generalise from our informants across the total workplaces they represent or beyond the particular cases to similar settings at the State level. On the other hand, we suggest that these data are suggestive of actual differences between the 'cultures' of various kinds of settings.

* Industry Training Board: This Board is part of the mechanisms established to manage the restructuring of the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Industry. It is an industry in serious decline and is an employer of a large number of NESB women workers. The interviewee represented union interests on the Board.

The informant made the interesting point that the new training arrangements as part of award restructuring draw on innovative principles that have the potential to improve equality of access of NESB workers to positions in the Australian labourforce. One example given was the focus on competency-based assessment rather than relying largely on formal paper qualifications. This means that the assessor looks for demonstrated skills for a position. One consequence, which has not been fully recognised by management and even by some union officials, is that such new practices make it essential that their positive effects are not undermined by the setting up of artificial barriers such as a priori English language tests. To do this would be to introduce a striking contradiction. That is, LOTE speakers are likely to be disadvantaged by such tests, when on the criterion of demonstrated skills, they might well be advantaged. For this informant, although she admitted that she had not thought in terms of biliteracy as a desirable

skill in itself, there was a definite place for using existing biliteracy competence or for the promotion of biliteracy within the industry or a particular company's training program.

* Private Employers: In this category, the firms surveyed included the vehicle and electronics industries. In Melbourne, these are large employers of NESB labour.

One of the informants was the organiser of English language training programs. She noted that employees within the firm lived in "two language worlds". In training classes run in company time, the NESB workers were immersed in an English language environment but as soon as they left a class, they reverted to their ethnic language with fellow workers. Communication within the firm generally was in English. The organiser expressed the view that the boundaries between the two worlds were unnecessarily rigid, leading to the potential for failure to exploit language opportunities to the full. That is to say, the amount of English language training given was inadequate anyway to develop 'real' competence so the reversion to the ethnic language meant that additional practice time in English was foregone. At the same time, the use of the ethnic language to facilitate communication was neither recognised in the English language classroom nor in the work context. In the latter case, LOTE language was not assessed nor was it acknowledged to be a skill in its own right.

Another informant who was in the personnel field perceived only the negative side of using LOTE in the workplace because the supervisors were English-speaking. Apparently there was no sense that encouragement of LOTE as a skill in its own right might lead to some change in the composition of the supervisory workforce, in turn enhancing equity and access for NESB workers. This informant stated that the firm was " very willing to take on workers with poor English - as process workers". The conclusion seemed to be , however, that these firms were unlikely to see biliteracy as a priority. The rationale for this was that training is seen to be the <u>choice</u> of the worker and private enterprise employers do not like to impose training in either English or the ethnic language. Neither do they wish to be seen to be legitimising the ethnic language as a 'normal' part of the communication structure of their workplaces.

* Non Government Organisations (NGO): In this category, we have included ethnic-specific organisations and community based literacy and basic education providers. While they have different structures and roles, they are all NGOs and seem to share some underlying common philosophies.

The respondents from these organisations saw biliteracy in terms of a dialectic between social and language learning as NESB individuals move between public and private and mainstream and ethnic domains. They applied this perspective to the peculiar situation of and issues for NESB women; the rationale being the distinctive life careers of women in contrast to men and a distinctive set of experiences of migration and settlement for women which run parallel to those of men, only intersecting infrequently. They were also concerned about the later life stages for NESB women and their welfare, given their propensity to live longer than males. The essence of their position was that language skills are an integral part of one's identity and sense of self. If one lives in dual language and cultural spheres, both languages are needed for satisfactory negotiation. All social exchanges are enhanced by ease of communication and so bilingualism and biliteracy should be maintained and promoted.

Nonetheless, it was their experience that literacy in the ethnic language was not taken seriously and hence, the politics of English language acquisition and literacy overrode the tepid support and actual resource allocation for bilingualism/biliteracy for adults. Further, the politics of gender ensured that women's issues, in spite of the current fine-sounding rhetoric and even of some structural advances including affirmative action legislation and provisions and special Offices for Women's Affairs at State and Federal levels, remained marginalised or at least a low priority.

* Federal Government Department: In this Department, the informant offered the comments that there were few persons of NES backgrounds in managerial positions, that LOTE is considered irrelevant because of the client base (mainly Australian born), and that the climate in the organisation was intolerant of the use of LOTE in the workplace, on the grounds that it caused feelings of annoyance, exclusion and assertions that "they're in Australia now and should use English". Her personal view was that LOTE could be used for ease of transmission of knowledge but that it was most unlikely to be considered for this Department.

These comments indicate that the non-government organisations were decidedly more supportive of biliteracy and of promoting it in adult education. The organisations in the other categories were at best ambivalent, being able to provide 'rational' reasons why it was difficult to recognise or promote it and, at worst, overtly resistant. In the latter event, one might think that the extent of the negative attitudes alone would contravene the access and equity provisions of their own organisations. They would certainly seem to be contrary to the spirit of 'multicultural Australia'.

2. Views from 'the field'

The views here (and in the next section) have been gathered from academics and practitioners with expertise in language and literacy. The development of high level L1 literacy has been advocated by experts in the field because of its beneficial effect on L2 literacy, especially in the case of medium level students. This fact is not recognised generally in Australia today. The only situation where L1 literacy is recommended is in teaching NESB migrants who are illiterate in their L1. This strategy is based on the course of action adopted in bilingual education for linguistic minority children. It was found that these children's education was retarded because they had to acquire literacy skills and, at the same time, cope with new concepts in a language in which they were not sufficiently proficient for these tasks.

There is no evidence (Wickert 1989) that L1 literacy is a prerequisite for L2 literacy. Undoubtedly, it facilitates L2 literacy learning but that is another question. What we do not want to see is L1 literacy tuition relegated to a transitional activity so that as soon as it is mastered it is discarded in favour of L2 literacy. L1 literacy, and by implication biliteracy, is too valuable for that, not only because cognitive transfer occurs from L1 to L2 in the literacy development process but also because biliteracy, namely literacy in English and in a LOTE, is a useful skill in at least two important domains in the life of an Australian citizen. These are : (a) the personal or private domain and (b) the work or public domain.

In the personal/private domain: biliteracy is useful because it enables individuals to:

* keep in touch with family members and friends overseas;
* deal with everyday matters independently;
* help others to deal with everyday matters; and
* assist their children to become bilingual in the oral and written modes.

In the work/public domain: biliteracy is useful because it enables individuals to:

* re-position themselves with respect to professional aspirations;
* facilitate communication among employees in an organisation;
* communicate with the clients of an organisation in Australia;

* conduct business with clients overseas;
* obtain professional/vocational information from multilingual sources; and
* interpret information received in a LOTE in a culturally appropriate way.

(based on Foster and Rado 1991; Rado and Foster 1991a,b)

As this list of the advantages of biliteracy shows, both NESB and ESB individuals can benefit. Further, it indicates that the economic benefits are reaped by individuals be they employees or independent professionals. Improved communication translates into increased knowledge which can economically benefit the recipients of this knowledge and the society of which they are members. It is an accepted fact that there is a close relationship between language and culture, therefore a linguistically more diverse Australia could improve its trade relations with its trading partners, particularly in Asia. Of course, the even greater benefit of international understanding must not be forgotten.

On the surface, the arguments supporting biliteracy for those in the workforce seem stronger than for those who are not. This is a misleading impression. The humanitarian and economic arguments are equally strong. For example, enabling NESB migrants to communicate in writing with family members and friends overseas can contribute to their mental health. This reduces human suffering and health care costs. In dispensing with the services of interpreters and translators, biliterate migrants save themselves and others the costs involved. By assisting their children to become biliterate in the oral and written modes, they facilitate the task of the school and help to educate the biliterate workforce Australia needs in its push to become a 'clever country'. Biliteracy does not so much generate wealth as it saves expenditure. What it saves are hidden costs which are generally not recorded and therefore not mentioned in the economic debate concerning NESB migrants and LOTE education.

The Implementation of Biliteracy: the L1 Component

1. Sociolinguistic features of biliteracy learning

Before discussing the details of strategies to facilitate the development of formally supported biliteracy programs, we need to make some preliminary points about how this is to be achieved. As we indicated earlier in this discussion, we shall restrict ourselves to NESB adult individuals, namely ESL learners. Hence, we must take into account particular features of adult as compared with child learning.

First, one of the obvious obstacles in mounting a biliteracy as opposed to an English literacy campaign for adult NESB migrants is the paucity, in fact the virtual non-existence, of qualified bilingual literacy teachers. Another is the likely cost of a biliteracy program so that one might be inclined to immediately abandon the whole idea even if one is convinced of its merits. One can, however, reconsider the situation and organise the biliteracy tuition component of adult migrant education in a learner-centred way, an approach we have advocated in the past for school age children (Rado 1984). (For information on bilingual education for children, see Appendix 1.)

The promotion of biliteracy skills among NESB migrants can be achieved by utilising the well-known capacity of adult learners to carry on independent study groups where they control the learning process. That this is a realistic expectation is being demonstrated by Council of Adult Education (CAE) discussion groups (Lee Dow 1989) and workplace learner groups (see, for example, Melbourne College of Textiles n.d.; Virgona 1989). Volunteer L1 literate tutors and the new technologies can also play an important role in promoting biliteracy.

Clearly a biliteracy campaign involves initial capital investment but after that the running cost would be much reduced. We must strongly stress that we take it for granted that the biliteracy programs are not intended to be in competition with the existing English literacy programs. In fact, they could not exist without them as English literacy is one of the two components.

Second, LOTE teaching experience with school age children does have some relevance to adult biliteracy learners. As human beings, we are all pre-disposed to language learning. This includes the capacity for learning more than one language. A widely held view among linguists is that children possess a Universal Grammar (UG) which constrains their grammatical development. Postulating an innate UG is one way of explaining how the competence of the native speaker is attained despite the insufficient and degenerate data children receive as input. Moreover, children must learn from positive evidence alone since they are not told that a given utterance is ungrammatical. Larsen-Freeman (1991:324) points out that adult L1 learners are in a similar position under naturalistic language acquisition circumstances. Adults are also forced to learn from insufficient and degenerate data. Does this mean that adults (not only children) have access to UG? Larsen-Freeman seems to side with those researchers who argue that:

> The results of the SLA (Second Language Acquisition) process differ so dramatically from first language acquisition where native speaker competence is always

> achieved, there are no transfer effects or fossilization, etc., that it is not likely that UG is present in its entirety in postpubescent learners. It is possible, however, that if language learners do not have direct access to UG, they do through their knowledge of their L1...

It must be stressed that there are other models explaining the development of native speaker competence. As yet, there is no generally accepted answer to the question why all individuals with normal faculties successfully acquire their first language but meet with different degrees of success when they attempt to master an L2 (Eckman et al. 1989; Birdsong 1990; Long 1990; Schumann 1990; Sokolik 1990).

One likely answer according to Larsen-Freeman is that L2 acquisition unlike L1 acquisition is influenced by such factors as : aptitude, social-psychological variables, personality, cognitive style and learning strategies (1991:328-9). It must be remembered that these factors operate in combination. Investigating the effects of one factor is misleading.

What this analysis does not take into account is the role of L1 in the acquisition of L2 as a source of linguistic awareness. In the words of Grieve et al. (1980:3):

> At the general level, language awareness may be characterised as the ability to reflect upon the structure and functions of language, as opposed to simply using it to comprehend and produce sentences.

Language or meta linguistic awareness manifests itself in various ways already at pre-school level. It includes:

* making judgements about the form, complexity and appropriateness of language;
* applying and commenting about the rules of language;
* correcting oneself or others;
* supplying interpretations;
* segmenting units of language;
* practising and playing with language; and
* inquiring about language.

(based on Rado 1986)

Language awareness must not be confused with the ability to state some of the grammatical rules of language. Bialystok (1981:34) characterises language awareness as 'explicit' knowledge which contrasts with 'implicit or non-conscious knowledge':

> ... implicit knowledge is 'descriptive' in that the structure of the knowledge is not apparent apart from its application; explicit knowledge is 'explanatory' in that its logical basis is understood independently of its application.

Tumner and Bowey (1980) ascribe a significant role to language awareness in the theory of reading. They share the view that it is a prerequisite of learning to read. Pleasingly, it has been shown that bilingual pre-school children become linguistically aware earlier than their monolingual peers (Slobin 1978). Linguistic awareness continues to play an important role in the development of higher level literacy reaching into adulthood. Bialystok (1981:37) states it thus:

> When automatic access to explicit linguistic knowledge is possible, the result is highly skilled linguistic performance. This special fluency with the structure of language apart from its conversational use is required for language tasks containing a high literacy or academic component. It may be that literacy itself requires that large portion of our linguistic knowledge is represented in this way.

Winser(1991) argues on the basis of research evidence that more proficient L1 and L2 readers are linguistically more aware than less proficient readers. The ability to attend specifically to features of the language system is transferable across languages. This gives an advantage to highly literate learners of L1 and leads to the conclusion that fostering biliteracy is beneficial to the L2 learner.

This is not the only evidence which suggests that literacy skills are transferable across languages. For example, Cumming's (1989:9) research shows that, in cognitively demanding linguistic tasks, literate expertise transfers crosslinguistically independently from fluency in L2. Benedetto (1985) has obtained similar results in studying the use of top-level organisational strategies in text comprehension. These findings suggest that developing high literate expertise in L1 might be a useful and viable strategy for raising the literacy level in L2. Further, we agree with Winser(1991:49) that teachers need to attend more explicitly to language and make it more visible to students. In other words:

> ...to *discuss explicitly* their [the students'] understandings and abilities with them is an appropriate teaching approach. In some cases a few but timely comments or probes about literacy strategies and features of language specific to the

genre or register of the text are all that may be needed, in the context of relevant learning activities. In others, more extensive group and whole-class activities may be required.

Winser does not mention the language in which the features of a given text are to be made explicit. In the case of an extensive discussion, it may well be that the learners' L1 should be used in order to ensure complete understanding. For this purpose, a bilingual helper may have to be involved. Such a person would have to be trained for this role.

2. Strategies in biliteracy learning

The strategies to be reviewed are:

* LOTE reading circles;
* Paired or intergenerational reading;
* New technologies aided learning; and
* Broad-based biliteracy models: ancillary support.

These strategies focus on the literacy development of L1 by means of using L1 in the process of learning. Apart from focusing on L1, the strategies rely heavily on professionals and paraprofessionals besides teachers. This is in harmony with the latest move of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres to gain a greater share in Adult and Community Education (Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training 1991).

(i) LOTE Reading Circles: It is through reading that most people maintain and further develop their literacy skills. Most of this is leisure reading in which we include the reading of newspapers and magazines. For many people, reading of this kind is a daily activity whereas writing is not. Promoting reading is a legitimate and effective literacy development strategy since it has been shown to foster creative literacy of a high order and raise linguistic and cultural awareness. We have documented in more detail elsewhere (Foster and Rado 1991; Rado and Foster 1991a,b) the advantages of setting up reading circles and the manner of doing so. Municipal libraries could play an important role here, particularly as they show increasing interest in looking after the NESB population in their area.

(ii) Paired Reading: Paired reading is essentially the provision of an audience for the reader. In its

intergenerational format, it is used to enlist the help of family members or other adults in promoting the literacy development of school age children who have literacy problems. The adult might do no more than provide an interested audience while the child reads aloud or the listener might have a greater involvement by engaging the reader in intermittent discussion and providing prompts and praise of various kinds. (For further details, see Rado and Foster 1991b.)

The paired reading model could be adapted for adults. The listening member of the pair could be recruited from among LOTE literate adults. Teachers could act as intermediaries in setting up pairs among the parents of the children they teach. In the case of some languages, senior students could also act as listening tutors in return for conversation practice with native speakers of the language. It would facilitate the teachers' task if their students had access to such practice. This might compensate them for the effort involved in organising such pairs.

(iii) New Technologies Aided Learning: In simplest terms, the new technologies are either the extension of the telephone or the computer or the combinations of both with various peripherals. For example, the audio compact disk, the video disk, the microphone, the touch screen, the facsimile machine, the barcoded book and lightpen (the list is not complete) offer a spectacular variety of group and individual learning activities in the learners' language of choice, by voice or print, with the capacity of instant switching from one language to another, from one topic or exercise to another.

The new technologies make it possible through the distance education mode to deliver L1 literacy tuition to groups of learners who share the same tongue. Relieved from the necessity of geographical proximity, it is more likely that the language of the teacher and the prospective learners can be matched.

Most importantly, the new technologies can be used by individuals in an interactive mode through voice and touch so that the learners can receive answers to their questions and can control the direction in which the program should unfold. In particular, the amount of repetition and the pace of practice is in the hands of the learners. Interestingly, there are some composition exercises which lend themselves to creative writing. In short, the new technologies are admirably suited to support literacy students including illiterates in their L1 since the latter can operate the computer without keyboarding skills by means of a touch screen. (For further details, see Sayers 1984; Treloar 1990 and Anderson et al. 1990).

(iv) Broad-Based Literacy Models: Ancillary Support: Rado (1991) has pointed out that for a bilingual school program to be successful the whole school community needs to be involved and not only the program participants. The involvement includes dissemination about the program to all members of the school community, ongoing in-servicing of the teachers involved, support services for the parents, input from non-participating teachers, the guidance and support of a steering committee, resource development and evaluation facilities.

That expectations of ancillary provisions for bilingual tuition for older students are realistic can be illustrated with some United States examples. For instance, a range of ancillary services were provided for Methodologies of Bilingual Instruction in Literacy Education Project Mobile. 'The project's primary objective was to offer LEP (Low English Proficiency) students the opportunity to gain proficiency in English while developing reading and writing skills in their native languages' (Berney and Plotkin 1990). The project served about 400 students. Although implemented in two high schools, most of the participating students were either looking for jobs or were working part-time. The ancillary provisions included the augmentation of project staff with a resource specialist and a paraprofessional. All staff attended in-service sessions or education courses. Students were provided with academic and personal counselling, tutoring and career and college advisement, conducted cultural trips and in principle access to a resource/computer centre. The project also offered parents basic skills, including basic literacy and ESL instruction.

Another successful example is the Bilingual Adult Basic Education Project (Graham 1990:1) which 'provided bilingual life skills instruction, counseling, and informational services to 160 non-English dominant adults across Pennsylvania by means of contracts to local education agencies.'

In both of these instances, the evaluation reports stressed the importance of the ancillary support services in the implementation of the projects.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the revival of interest in adult literacy in Australia, biliteracy has not yet attained a high profile. This paper has been at pains to examine the pros and cons of L1 literacy on both theoretical and practical grounds. Our support for L1 literacy has not been at the expense of L2 or English literacy; in our view, L1 and L2 literacy are

interrelated dimensions of literacy for Australia's NESB population. For this reason, a significant part of the paper was devoted to presenting (i) a rationale and (ii) actual strategies for implementing L1 literacy programs for adults.

We are heartened that the theme of this paper is so timely, in that a favourable climate for many developments in the adult and community education field has emerged which should lead to enhanced consciousness of biliteracy. To mention only two such instances. In Victoria, the TAS Co-ordinating Committee(ESL) was established in 1990 to bring together the ESL provider networks, TAFE, AMEP and the Schools Division of the Victorian Ministry of Education in order to provide coherent, quality ESL provision to the NESB community of the post compulsory schooling group. This Committee has targeted the issue of first language information to students as a priority (TAS 1990). Obviously, literacy in L1 must be addressed as part of this issue. Second, a Senate Standing Committee Report on Adult and Community Education was published in November 1991. The commitment to this sector was stated in the following words:

> If we as a nation are serious about our economic and social justice goals, we must get serious about adult and community education. (p.8)

Even more important for our purposes is the identification of Neighbourhood Houses and Community Learning Centres as key sites for adult education and the linking of these community based provisions with other educational facilities such as school and TAFE buildings, libraries and computer resources(pp.xi-xii). Our research has led us to view the community providers as crucial if L1 literacy learning is to be available to a broad range of adult NESB learners, especially women. It is only by combining open access community provision with mainstream services (such as schools, colleges and universities) that addressing the variety of biliteracy needs in the Australian community becomes feasible.

A society which is composed of ESB and NESB Australians must cater for disparate aspirations. Senator Aulich had this to say in the Foreword (1991:xv) to the Senate Report:

> ...adult and community education is growing, and now provides education, training, recreation and self-confidence to millions of Australians. And above else, it is fast becoming the social cement in a society which not only needs cleverness but a sense of community and civility in a world where economists and Treasury mandarins still measure the pursuit of happiness in dollar terms.

This seems an appropriate justification also for building *biliteracy* in a *multicultural* Australia which, by definition, implies recognising multiple perspectives to achieve multiple goals.

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APPENDIX 1

I. BILINGUAL EDUCATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

In contrast for primary-aged children some provisions exist, notably in Victoria, but also in some other states, mainly in the government and Catholic Education systems for developing bilingual oracy and literacy.

There are different models to suit children with different home language backgrounds. For NESB students or L1 learners the emphasis is on home language maintenance and conceptual development. For ESB or L2 learners the emphasis is on L2 learning as well as conceptual development. The distinctive feature of such bilingual programs is that children receive subject matter instruction <u>in</u> more than one language in the course of their schooling.

The models for L1 learners usually start with using the LOTE as the language of instruction with some practice in oral English. Over the period of primary schooling the LOTE is gradually phased out to be retained as a conventional school subject only. In this transitional model the pairing of subject with language is for the school to decide. Lessons are taught monolingually in the language allocated to the subject in question. Care is taken to use one language at a time.

Another model relies on team teaching which makes it possible to give NESB children support in their mother tongue by means of forming sub-groups. This gives the bilingual teacher the opportunity to ensure complete comprehension with explanations in the children's L1. Such explanations can be preplanned ensuring the use of one language at a time. There is, however the danger that the child's LOTE and English would be used indiscriminately. This is a practice that hinders language development and should be guarded against.

The models for ESB or L2 learners are of the immersion type. In this instance the ESB or dominant language child begins schooling <u>in</u> the minority language with the gradual introduction of learning <u>in</u> English. This model can be implemented as full or partial immersion in a LOTE.

Dellora (1991) has commented on 22 evaluation reports on bilingual programs in Victoria. Since different methods of evaluation were used it is difficult to interpret the results. It can be stated, however, that the reports favour the bilingual method as an efffective oracy and literacy learning/teaching strategy.

The fundamental difference between the models for L1 and L2 learners is that the former are taught literacy skills in the L1 first, whereas the L2 learners are introduced to literacy in the L2 that is in their weaker language. In both cases the children are given time to become literate in one language before they are faced with the task of becoming literate in the other language because it is feared that becoming biliterate simultaneously may lead to confusion. Edelsky (1986) is one of the few researchers who contests this belief. His research data show that the simultaneous acquisition of biliteracy is in fact advantageous because of the transferabilty of the reading and writing strategies involved.

II. LOTE LEARNING FOR SCHOOL AGE STUDENTS AT THE POST PRIMARY LEVEL

Victoria has made the learning of LOTE compulsory at junior secondary level. Most students will be beginners in whatever LOTE the school will offer. It remains to be seen how the secondary sector will accomodate the graduates from the primary bilingual programs so that they can continue their LOTE study at a more advanced level. It is hoped that these students will be catered for in systemic schools or at the the Victorian School of Languages in such a way that tertiary institutions will welcome them because of their advanced language skills.